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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, September 25, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "IRON IN FAMILY MEALS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The request that gets our earnest attention today comes from a mother who complains that her children need iron-rich food but won't eat it. She writes: "Dear Aunt Sammy: I wonder if you could give me some help on a family food problem. The doctor has advised me that my children need more iron in their diet. He suggested especially giving them meats like liver, heart and kidney, and also plenty of greens. But what can I do with a couple of youngsters that won't touch the meats suggested, and turn up their noses at any kind of greens?"

This mother goes on to say in a postscript that she doesn't blame her children much because she herself thinks these foods are very unappetizing.

Well, there is a problem -- a good one to talk over, too, because no doubt other listeners are up against the same situation. Anyway, you know, this iron matter is one we all would do well to check up on, especially in the fall. The nutrition people say that many of us go shy on the iron we greatly need. They also say that plenty of iron in the diet is one way of keeping in good health during the winter.

But to get back to that letter. I've consulted the foods and nutrition people at the Bureau of Home Economics and their ideas may solve all these troubles with iron-rich foods.

To begin with, they say that when you're making out iron-rich menus, you have many foods to depend on. Liver and green are two good items. But they aren't the only ones. Among the animal foods that stand high for their iron content are: eggs, especially the yolks; oysters and shrimps; meats, particularly liver, kidney, brain and heart, but also the lean cuts of beef, veal, pork and lamb, and the dark meat of poultry. Then, among the vegetable foods, you have not only "greens," or green leaves, like turnip and beet tops, chard, spinach, kale, broccoli leaves and so on, but also dried fruits like apricots, peaches, currants, dates, raisins, figs, and prunes. (Children are sure to like dried fruits) And you also have the whole-grain flours or cereals, particularly wheat, barley, rye and oats. Molasses, sorghum and most cane sirups "rate" for their iron. So do such vegetables as beans, peas and lentils, both fresh and dried. Finally, nuts contain iron, particularly almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, pecans and hickory nuts.

That's the list of foods rich in iron which I got from the Bureau of Home Economics. It is one answer to the problem of getting your iron quota.

But now, how to persuade the family to eat iron-rich food? Well, the best way I know is to cook and serve it so that it looks and tastes too tempting to resist. Lots of people don't like liver because it has been abused in cooking. The same for heart, brains, and kidney. Lots of people have a deep-dyed prejudice

against all kinds of greens because of the way they're cooked. Maybe the mother who wrote the letter, and also her children, found these foods unappetizing because she didn't have the best methods for cooking them.

Well, here are 3 things to remember about cooking liver. First, don't overdo it. Use a moderate temperature and cook only long enough to change the color-- actually only long enough to heat it through thoroughly. Liver is a tender meat to begin with, so you don't need to cook it for tenderness, as you do many other meats. That dark, unpleasant, leathery, boarding-house liver is the result of too much heat or too long cooking.

The second point to remember about preparing liver is which kind of liver needs scalding and which doesn't. For the sake of the best flavor, you scald lamb and pork liver before you cook it. Beef and calf liver don't need this treatment.

The third point about cooking liver is to adapt your cooking to its age. Of course, all young meats are more delicate than cuts from older animals. This holds true with liver, heart and other meat organs. So you can broil either calf or lamb liver. You can broil it or you can cook it quickly in the frying pan with a little fat. But older beef and pork liver tastes better if you braise it or bake it, or if you combine it with other foods. Good liver combinations are liver-and-rice loaf; liver scalloped with potatoes; creamed liver; or highly seasoned liver in a paste for sandwiches. By the way, liver-paste sandwiches, if the paste is carefully made, are great favorites for school lunch boxes. That's one good way to get liver in the child's diet.

But I mustn't spend all my time talking about liver when we haven't mentioned those two other iron-rich meats -- kidney and heart. Kidney is just about as valuable as liver for building red blood cells. It contains a good deal of iron. Yes, and it contains 3 vitamins -- A, B, and G. The rules for cooking kidney are much like the rules for cooking liver. Don't overcook. Broil quickly or simmer gently in water. Young delicate lamb kidney is good broiled. Older beef kidney makes a delicious stew. Kidney pie is a favorite dish in England.

Heart is the third of these inexpensive iron-rich meats. Heart is less tender than liver or kidney, so the best way to cook it for tenderness is to braise it -- that is, brown it in fat first, and then cook with water in a covered dish in a very moderate oven. Fill the opening in the heart with a well-seasoned stuffing and sew it up. Brown the heart. Then put it in a covered pan in the oven with a small amount of water. A beef heart will take 2 hours to cook tender. A calf heart is smaller and more delicate so will be tender in less time. Serve the heart in slices like a little stuffed roast. The drippings will make nice brown gravy.

Now a word about greens. Greens are another food often ruined by overcooking. In general, the secret of making any green vegetable delicious and attractive is to cook it just a few minutes in an open kettle of boiling lightly salted water. Some crinkly leaves like spinach have so much water on their leaves after washing that they don't need any water added in cooking. Many green leaves will cook in from 5 to 10 minutes. Drain quickly and well, add salt, pepper and butter. Serve while they're still piping hot; a nice bright green in color; and have that good fresh taste. Maybe the youngsters will enjoy their greens, especially if you dress them up with a hard-cooked-egg flower on top, and maybe a slice or two of lemon.

Finally, you know, any youngster is more likely to enjoy food that the grown-ups in the family enjoy, and to dislike what they dislike. That goes for liver and greens as well as for anything else on the menu.

